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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
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RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0084
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 8719
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0350
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000260

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2018

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SUBJECT: THE OFFER THAT WASN'T: NIGERIAN HELICOPTERS FOR
DARFUR

REF: USUN NY 0076

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Per reftel, Nigerian military advisor to the United Nations Brigadier General Benjamin T. Obasa indicated that the Government of Nigeria was considering providing all required helicopter assets for UNAMID. Post's subsequent approaches to the GON on the matter elicited blank stares, and it appears that Obasa was never authorized to make the offer in the first place. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Reftel reports General Obasa's offer of twelve much-needed attack and transport helicopters to be put at the disposal of the UNAMID deployment. Post's follow-up with GON officials, however, indicates that Obasa's offer is unknown within Defense Headquarters, and that he was not authorized to make it. Furthermore, Post believes that, due to operational needs in the Niger Delta and poor maintenance, Nigeria's helicopter fleet likely does not even include twelve aircraft that could be detached for UNAMID.

13. (C//NF) COMMENT: We believe that Obasa has spent years outside of Nigeria on various staff and training assignments. His last assignment was as Foreign Liaison for Defense Intelligence, and we doubt that he is now in any type of position that would allow him access to current information on the state of Nigeria's helicopter fleet. In any event, the offer does not appear to be bonafide. The February 7 edition of the popular daily newspaper "Punch" quotes Defense Minister Ahmed as citing UNAMID's need for combat helicopter support, and lamenting the UN's inability to provide them -- but he makes no mention of Nigeria's ability and willingness to meet such a need. Uncoordinated, undisciplined statements from GON military officials are not at all unusual, and are just one of the challenges of Nigeria's complex political/military environments. END COMMENT.
SANDERS